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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 3 May 1991, at 5.25 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. PALME (Sweden)

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Preparation for future sessions and review of documentation

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 5.25 p.m.

PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5 and CRP.6)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the Board had before it two documents, one dealing with the criteria governing election of UNICEF representatives on joint committees (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5) and the other with future work and procedures of the Executive Board (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6).

2. Ms. KITTANI (Deputy Secretary of the Board), referring in connection with document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6 to the list of requests for reports and policy papers made during the current session, which had just been distributed, said that the Secretariat would welcome guidance from Board members on the possible combination of the reports or papers requested in the light of the decisions that had been adopted with a view to reducing the volume of documentation.

3. Mr. PETTIT (United Kingdom) noted first that the Board should in considering agenda item 5 take into account the extremely relevant remarks made by the German delegation in the Programme Committee on the subject of draft proposals. Since there was no time to prepare a draft decision on the item under consideration, the lessons drawn from the organizational session held in February should now be codified.

4. His delegation wished to propose two changes of procedure: the 24-hour time-limit for the submission of a proposal under a given item should run from the conclusion, rather than the opening, of the debate, so as to encourage sponsors to take into account the issues raised during the debate. The second change would be aimed at limiting the length of the preamble of any draft decision, a practice which was already followed in other bodies.

5. With regard to the requests for reports or papers, any reasonable combination would be acceptable.

6. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico), referring to the questions raised in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6, said that the idea of holding parallel meetings was unacceptable. The time had come to demonstrate a sense of realism. The volume of the Board's work made it necessary to lengthen the sessions. The Bureau should be requested to draw up a proposal to that effect for consideration at the June 1991 session. The list of requested documentation for the 1992 session should be considerably shortened. Her delegation supported document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5 on the criteria for election of UNICEF representatives on joint committees.

7. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Observer for Norway), noting that delegations had not shown the necessary restraint where requests for reports or papers were concerned, suggested that the Bureau should be given responsibility for making an effort, in consultation with the Secretariat, to combine the reports requested or incorporate them in the overall report of the Executive Director in order to limit the volume of documentation.

8. Mr. McARTHUR (United States of America) commended the Secretariat on having submitted the documentation on time, thus greatly facilitating delegations' work. The importance of respecting deadlines could not be overemphasized, since late appearance of documents prevented a fruitful exchange of views, as had been the case at the organizational session in February.

9. With regard to some of the questions listed in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6, his delegation, while supporting all initiatives aimed at limiting documentation, nevertheless felt that it was impossible at the present stage to define more closely issues which might be the subject of biennial reports. The Board should continue to show flexibility in that regard.

10. He supported the recommendation relating to country programmes. UNICEF should seek to maintain the quality of documents, which had in fact perceptibly decreased, while reducing their length. It would be useful, for example, to present in tabular form the data on budget estimates and the proposals relating to staffing. The omission from the country programmes of the extremely useful statistics that had previously appeared on the back of the cover page was regrettable. For convenience, it would be desirable to indicate on the documents the relevant agenda item or items. In accordance with the provisions of Executive Board decision 1990/1, any proposal involving expenditure should be accompanied by an estimate of the budgetary implications, so as to facilitate interaction between the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance.

11. With respect to the duration of the Board's regular sessions, the United States considered the two weeks allocated to be sufficient. Delegations therefore needed to be punctual in order to avoid wasting valuable time. Another important point regarding in the rationalization of work was that the Secretariat should refrain, except where absolutely necessary, from radically changing agenda items at the last minute.

12. With regard to the issue of holding inter-sessional meetings, he would like to know who would participate in such meetings. UNICEF could facilitate participation by Board members in meetings, seminars or conferences held throughout the year, for example at the International Child Development Centre in Florence, by notifying them in advance of the dates of such meetings.

13. Lastly, he supported the recommendations contained in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5, and would like to know the procedure for designating alternates for a given session.

14. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) said that the Bureau should continue to keep the Board's working method under review, since the majority of delegations had not made known their views on the issues raised in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6. The Board's increasingly heavy agenda had necessitated the holding of night meetings, a practice which was particularly burdensome for small delegations like his own and should not become institutionalized.

(Mr. Fernandez, Liberia)

15. With regard to the duration of the Board's regular sessions, he had argued at the organizational session that it should be extended. That was also the view of the Mexican delegation. Three additional days would perhaps suffice.

16. With regard to the United Kingdom's suggestion that the deadline set for submission of proposals under a given item should run from the conclusion of the debate, a procedure which was followed by many bodies, it would have the drawback of unduly postponing the consideration of proposals.

17. Miss ZINDORA (Zimbabwe) said she would confine herself at the present late stage to associating herself with the remarks of the representatives of Mexico and Liberia regarding the lengthening of Executive Board sessions. It was indeed becoming increasingly difficult to give in-depth consideration to the increasingly numerous issues included in the agenda.

18. Mr. ABU SALIH (Sudan) said that the title of conference room paper E/ICEF/1991/CRP.4 should be brought into line with the wording of the relevant resolution.

19. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of the Sudan that the secretariat would make the necessary correction. As to the comments made regarding the Executive Board's procedures and working methods, the Bureau would consider them at the organizational session to be held in June 1991.

20. Mr. HIMES (Director, International Child Development Centre) said he was pleased to announce that an agreement extending Italy's support for the Centre from August 1991 to August 1994 had recently been concluded with UNICEF. That agreement showed the importance the Italian Government attached to cooperation with UNICEF. The interest shown in the work of the Centre by Executive Board members was grounds for great satisfaction.

21. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director) said that UNICEF was extremely grateful to the Italian Government for the support extended to the Centre in Florence, whose outstanding contribution to the protection of children had several times been highlighted during the course of the session.

22. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Council would hold its 11th meeting after a short break.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.